



University of
Strathclyde
Science

Future information environments: deserts, jungles or parks?

Gordon Dunsire

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Information environment

- ✧ From AKM9:
- ✧ “A common information environment offers easy, convenient access to the widest range of information resources catering for the widest range of needs of the widest range of users
- ✧ It requires the collaboration of archives, libraries, museums and governments”

Landscaping

- ✧ Identifies collections of resources likely to meet an enquirer's information needs
 - ✧ In the common information environment of archives, libraries, museums, ...
- ✧ Identifies item-level finding-aids for those collections
 - ✧ Cross-searchable or separate

Ideal landscaping service

- ✧ Is transparent to the enquirer
- ✧ Enquirer inputs what they are interested in
 - ✧ Person, organisation, place, event, subject
- ✧ Service outputs information about relevant resources
 - ✧ What items, where they are located, when they can be accessed, how they can be used

Deserts

- ✧ Metadata for collections or items is
 - ✧ Incomplete and inconsistent
 - ✧ Out-of-date and unreliable
 - ✧ Difficult to find and use
 - ✧ Sparse, scattered, disconnected

The Old 5-star Information Mine



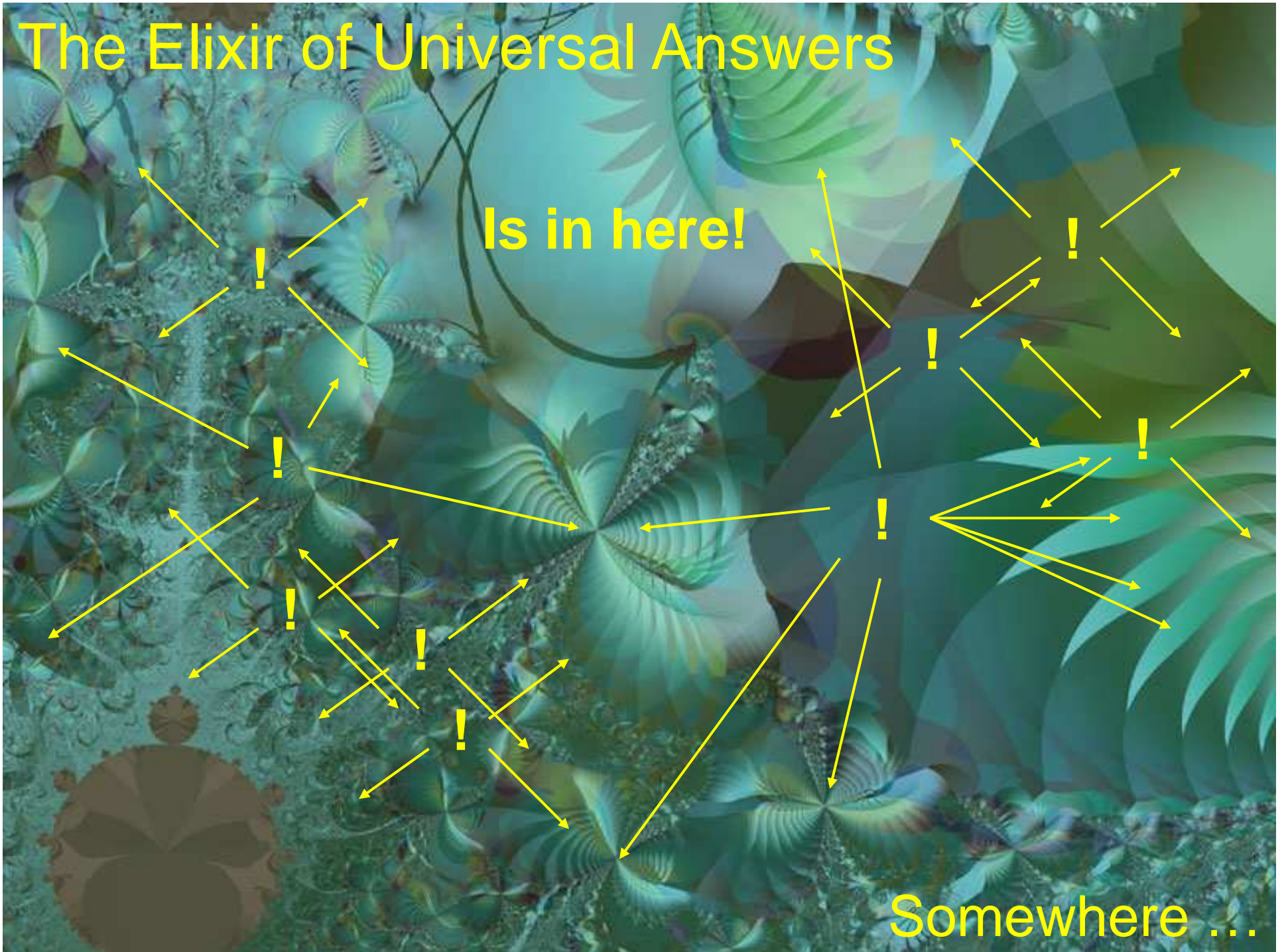
Jungles

- ✧ Metadata is:
 - ✧ Inconsistent
 - ✧ Duplicated many times over
 - ✧ In multiple versions and formats
 - ✧ Produced by commercial and political groups as well as cultural organisations
 - ✧ Circuitous to use
 - ✧ Dense, undifferentiated

The Elixir of Universal Answers

Is in here!

Somewhere ...



Parks

✧ Metadata is:

- ✧ Consistent, coherent and complete
- ✧ Rich enough to be used flexibly
- ✧ Contextualised, appropriate, and relevant
- ✧ Clear, distinguishable

The well-professed garden

Look
here



And
here



And
here



Please explore – all paths are signposted

Some gardening tools

- ✧ Authoritative headings
 - ✧ Metadata at all levels of granularity using consistent and coherent labels for referencing “cultural” objects
 - ✧ People, organisations, places, events, themes, topics
- ✧ Quality control and metadata workflows
 - ✧ Currency and completeness
 - ✧ Versions and duplicates
- ✧ Full-text indexing and “smart” tagging
 - ✧ Digital/digitised texts
 - ✧ Not just primary information resources
 - ✧ Secondary (abstracts, summaries, indexes)
 - ✧ Tertiary (directories)

A future information environment

- ✧ Scene: I've just been visiting Edinburgh Castle
- ✧ And I'm walking down the High Street towards Holyrood Palace
- ✧ With my i-PIE
 - ✧ (Personal Information Environment)
 - ✧ Portable media tablet/phone/camera
 - ✧ Connected to free city-wide wi-fi
 - ✧ Knows where I am (gps)
 - ✧ And what I'm interested in (pre-set by me)
- ✧ When it buzzes ...



On your left < is the site of the [Robert Burns](#) house, marked by a [plaque](#)

In a house
on the east side of this close
Robert Burns
lived during his first visit
to Edinburgh 1756

[This building](#)
[The house](#)
[Closes](#)
[Burns' visit](#)
[Edinburgh in 1756](#)



Within 1000 m



Burns manuscript exhibition

National Library of Scotland



Edinburgh Room

Edinburgh Central Library



Farming in 18th C Scotland

National Museum of Scotland



Excise records of Robert Burns

National Archives of Scotland



Thank you

- ✧ With fingers crossed that some of this will happen!
- ✧ g.dunsire@strath.ac.uk